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ABSTRACT

This study examined motivational factors responsible for the retention of experienced teachers in Jamaica. Using a stratified sample of Jamaican teachers in training, the study compared the motivations for teaching of 821 novice student teachers with the motivations of 206 student teachers having more than 3 years of teaching experience. Data from participant surveys indicated that the total motivation of experienced teacher trainees was significantly greater than that of the novice teacher trainees. Experienced teacher trainees were significantly less extrinsically motivated and significantly more intrinsically motivated than were the novice teacher trainees. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

Materialist Culture and Teacher Attrition in the Caribbean: Motivational Differences Between Novice and Experienced Jamaican Teacher Trainees

Tony Bastick
2002

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MATERIALIST CULTURE AND TEACHER ATTRITION IN THE CARIBBEAN: MOTIVATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NOVICE AND EXPERIENCED JAMAICAN TEACHER TRAINEES

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Abstract

The fluctuation of teacher supply and employment in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries makes it imperative that we settle the issue of why local teachers choose to stay as teachers or to leave the profession. This knowledge could be used to improve recruitment and retention of local teachers.

Research on school attrition usually employs longitudinal studies that follow a cohort of teachers through the initial stages of their careers in order to identify factors that are responsible for those who drop out along the way. These may not be factors that are directly amenable to selection and training of teachers. In contrast, this paper uses an Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Altruistic (EIA) factor model, specially developed to assess the motivations of Jamaican teachers, to compare the current motivations of novice and experienced teachers who have equivalent training. This synchronous research design avoids problems of economic and developmental change usually confounded in longitudinal studies. The purpose of the synchronous comparison design used here was to find the motivation components responsible for the retention of the experienced Jamaican teachers.

Using a stratified sample (n=1027) of Jamaican teachers in training, the motivations for teaching of 821 novices were compared with the motivations of 206 teachers who had more than three years' of teaching experience. Results show the higher all-round motivation of these experienced Jamaican teachers and the lesser influence of materialism on their motivations for teaching.

Introduction

The fluctuation of teacher supply and employment in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries makes it imperative that we settle the issue of why local teachers choose to stay as teachers or to leave the profession. This knowledge could be used to improve recruitment and retention of local teachers and so help to reduce the fluctuation of teacher supply and employment.

Teacher attrition is both a regional and global problem. It is estimated in the United States that as many as 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years (Darling-Hammond, & Sclan, 1996). Many studies have researched factors that might influence teacher attrition (Betancourt-Smith, 1994; Gonzalez, 1995; Macdonald, 1995; Macdonald, 1999, Marso, & Pigge, 1995; Wilkerson, 2000). This study proposes that teachers leave the profession because it does not match their expectations. These expectations are operationalised by their motivations for teaching, categorised as Extrinsic, Intrinsic and Altruistic.

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Salary is an example of extrinsic motivation. Research studies have found that increased salaries are a positive indicator of how long teachers stay in the profession. (Gonzalez, 1995; Shen, 1997) and particularly influence the length of the first teaching spell (Stinebrickner, 1998). Higher salaries are a major reason for teachers leaving the profession. However, the matter is more complex because it has been found that teachers accept reduced salaries when joining the profession. For example, Seyfarth, and Ranson (1989), researching reasons for teacher attrition in a longitudinal study with 14,489 teachers found that generally, teachers who left education for positions in other areas received higher salaries than those who entered teaching from positions in other areas. The interaction between attrition and extrinsic motivators like salary is complex. For example Berry, and Hare (1986), in a study of the teacher labour market found that teachers were still motivated primarily because of the intrinsic rewards of working with children or adolescents; yet increased incentives, such as salary, were important because they are a direct expression of indicators of intrinsic motivation such as how society values education. Traditional research on teacher attrition has not been able to unravel these complexities.

Teacher supply and employment in Jamaica

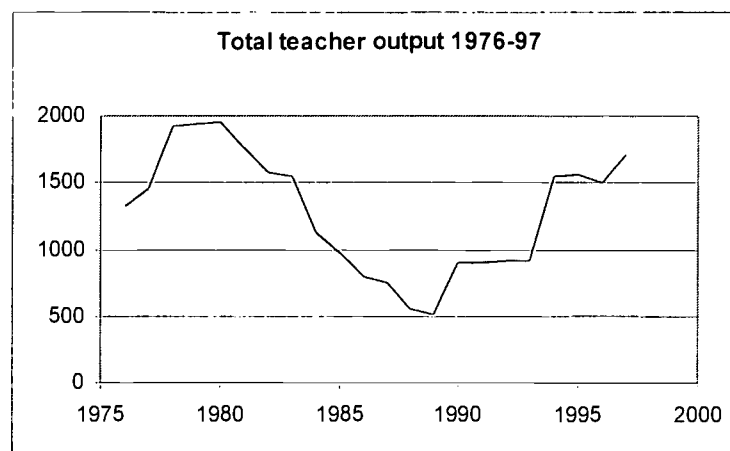
Each year Jamaica suffers an exodus of its most qualified teachers to recruiting agencies in Canada, the U.S.A. and the U.K. The following selected figures in Table 1 on teacher output and employment in Jamaica give some perspective on the fluctuations in teacher employment. These figures are derived from the year-by-year Economic and Social Survey Jamaica unless otherwise noted. The MOE figures for 1995/96 showed that 20,878 teachers were employed which was 2.7% down on the previous year. 79% were trained (MOE 1995-6)

Table 1: Teacher output and employment in Jamaica 1979-1996

Year	Teachers employed	Teachers trained	
1979/80	20010	n/a	
1987/88	18194	15584	86%
1988/89	18246	15523	85%
1990/91	18523	14297	77%
1991/92	19465	14924	77%
1995/96	20878	n/a	

These fluctuations are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Fluctuation in teacher output: Jamaica 1976-1987



For comparison Table 2 shows the school aged population served by these teachers.

Table 2: Jamaican school aged population 5-19 yrs. 1970-1992

Year	School Population
1970	710900
1980	862800
1982	835750
1992	783050

It is against this background that we compare the motivations of novice and experienced teachers. The purpose of comparing motivations of novice teachers in training with experienced teachers in training on the assumption that the differences in their motivations might have some bearing on why the experienced teachers stay in the profession and why so many novice teachers leave the profession.

Method

Research on school attrition usually divides the problems into four categories: teachers who voluntarily move to different schools; teachers who move to different schools through involuntary assignment; teachers who voluntarily leave teaching altogether; and teachers who leave teaching involuntarily through personal action, or who retire (Boe, Barkanic, & Leow, 1999). These are usually synchronic longitudinal studies that follow a cohort of teachers through the initial stages of their careers in order to identify the factors that are responsible for those who drop out along the way. These may not be factors that are not directly amenable to selection and training of teachers, such as changes in the economy affecting teacher shortages and relative pay or to changes in the personal development of the individuals such as marital and fertility needs (Stinebrickner, 1998). This study uses a different design. It is a diachronic study that controls for economic change and levels of training by taking a 'snap-shot' at one moment in time that compares the motivations of novice and experienced teachers who have the same degree of professional training.

The Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Altruistic (EIA) Motivation model of teacher motivation

Based on 15-minute open interviews with 130 Jamaican teacher trainees and education lecturers, Bastick (2000) developed a 13-item instrument to measure the motivations of teacher trainees in Jamaica. When administered to 1444 teacher trainees island wide, representing one-third of the teacher trainee population, the instrument revealed a clear Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Altruistic (EIA) factor model of teacher motivation that accounted for 51% of the total variance in the population. This instrument was administered to a stratified sample of novice teacher trainees and experienced teacher trainees who have three or more years' of teaching experience. The two groups had the same training, both groups consisting of first, second and third year teacher trainees. The inexperienced trainees ranged in age between 16 and 43 years with a median at 20 years. Allowing for some missing values, there were 217 males and 603 females with 382, 149 and 288 trainees in the first, second and third years of training respectively; that is 46.5%, 18.1% and 35.1% respectively. 525 were from rural parts of Jamaica and 270 were from urban areas in Jamaica that is 66.0% and 33.9% respectively. Of the 206 experienced teacher trainees, there were 45 males and 160 females (one missing value). Their teaching experience ranged from 3 years to 25 years with a median of 5 years. Although the median age of the experienced group was 28 years the eldest was 50 years old. 144 of these experienced trainees hailed from rural Jamaica while 50 of them lived in urban areas; that is 72.7% and 25.3% respectively. It will be noticed that a larger percentage of the experienced trainees came from rural Jamaica. They were also distributed across the three years of training as 60, 50, and 96 respectively; that is 29.1%, 24.3%, and 46.6%.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 lists the mean factor scores for the total motivation and EIA component motivations of the two groups.

Table 3: Mean motivation components of Experienced and Novice teacher trainees

Teaching Experience	Years	Motivational differences			
		Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Altruistic	Total
Novice	0	0.0342	-0.2567	-0.0123	-0.2348
Experienced	3+	-0.1723	0.6289	0.1101	0.5667
Difference (effect size)		0.2066	-0.8856	-0.1224	-0.8014
Sig (p)		0.0120	0.0000	0.0690	0.0000

Table 3 shows that the total motivation of experienced teacher trainees is significantly greater than that of novice teacher trainees (0.5667 v -0.2348 , $p < 0.05$). They are significantly less extrinsically motivated than novice teacher trainees and significantly more intrinsically motivated than novice teacher trainees. These factor scores are normalized $N(0,1)$ and so the differences are effect sizes. From Table 3 it is seen that the two groups differ most significantly on the intrinsic motivation component. This difference is also the largest effect size. It is then quite probable that intrinsic motivation is the component of motivation that is most responsible for the retention of teachers in the profession. This finding is consistent with a study by Shen (1997) that also found that awareness of intrinsic benefits is a positive indicator of how long teachers stay in the profession.

This result can also be tested by using this EIA factor model with long serving teachers in different national contexts. The importance of this result is that it might be possible to reduce the high rates of teacher attrition by giving some consideration to applicants' intrinsic motivations when selecting candidates for teacher training courses.

It should be noted that the EIA three factor model of teacher motivation, developed in this research, is not a subtractive model. That is, for example, high intrinsic motivation does not preclude high extrinsic motivation. It is possible that a teacher high in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might not only make teaching a life long career but also rise to the top of the teaching profession. Future research could also test such hypotheses using the EIA model by comparing the measured motivations of teachers who are at different levels within the profession.

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